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SAFEGUARDING YOUR FOOD AND DRUG SUPPLY -- NO. 14

A radio talk by W. W. Vincent, chief western district, Food and Drug Administration, delivered Thursday, September 11, 1930, through Stations KGO, San Francisco, KFI, Los Angeles and KGQ, Spokane, at 9:45 A. M. Pacific Standard Time.

My friends, this is your Government representative again, telling you how your foods and drugs are safeguarded through the enforcement of the Federal Food and Drugs Act, and telling you how to read labels. For fourteen weeks I have been pointing out wherein the Food and Drugs Act operates in your interest and serves to protect your food supply. For fourteen weeks I have been urging you to read the labels, to the end you become an intelligent and discriminating buyer.

I have heard from many of you. I believe my talks have been of benefit to some. One lady writes that she runs a cook house and buys hundreds of dollars' worth of food each month. Certainly it is necessary that she be a discriminating buyer. Another lady who feeds 120 girls says she is acutely interested. One lady tells me my talks are just what the housewives need. Manufacturers with thousands of dollars invested in the advertising of their particular labels have written. A manufacturer of a nationally advertised extract tells me that he hopes my talks can continue indefinitely, and that I will eventually touch upon practically every one of the various classes of food products. He feels that ethical manufacturers will be relieved of unfair competition such as a few unscrupulous manufacturers still resort to. Municipal food and health authorities have written me; in fact it seems that everybody is interested in the foods and drugs that they consume.

Last week I promised to tell you about eggs. In the application of the Foods and Drugs Act a great deal of attention has been paid to eggs--, fresh eggs and storage eggs; natural and oil treated eggs; good and bad eggs; dried and frozen eggs; duck eggs, and fish eggs.

Fish eggs recall a little story. You know this imported Russian Caviar. A lot of us don't like it but, nevertheless, it's expensive. Genuine caviar was first prepared from Sturgeon eggs and to many people the term "Caviar" is synonymous with "Sturgeon Caviar". Your food authorities subscribe to this opinion.

Caviar can also be made from the roe of other fish, if the special method for manufacturing caviar be employed. Where fish eggs other than Sturgeon are used you will find that the labels read, for example, "Whitefish Caviar", or "Catfish Caviar". Generally you will find the product artificially colored with either charcoal or caramel in an effort to simulate the appearance of the genuine Sturgeon Caviar, which is naturally dark in color.

For many years there have been importations of genuine caviar in barrels into the United States from Russia. Upon receipts, usually at New York, the material is repacked into smaller containers of the desired size. A few years ago several of these New York concerns decided they could do a little better financially did they substitute Whitefish Roe for Sturgeon Roe and such was done. They colored it dark with caramel. They neglected, however, to change their labels. It was but a short time until your food authorities realized something was wrong with the caviar market.

Investigation quickly showed that Catfish eggs and Whitefish eggs were finding their way to several manufacturers in New York. These firms buying this material continued to label the product as a genuine imported Russian caviar. Your food authorities invoked the Food and Drugs Act. Seizure actions removed the product from the market. Decrees of condemnation resulted. The published Notices of Judgment attest to the perfidy of those who sought to betray the epicurean palate by the decidedly fishy practice of coloring Whitefish eggs when nature never intended them to enjoy such distinction.

My friends, regardless of your economic status; whether you eat fish eggs or hens' eggs, the Federal Food and Drugs Act is operating to protect your health and pocketbook.

Coming now to the subject of hens' eggs. I wonder how many of you realize that there is produced annually in the United States an estimated total of two billion dozens of eggs. There were imported during 1929 over thirteen million pounds of frozen and over twelve million pounds of dried eggs. These figures are enormous and we wonder what disposition can be made of such a quantity.

These days it is difficult to know your eggs, let alone from whence they came. There are concerns in California and Washington whose eggs I happen to know are from time to time consumed in the Maracaibo oil fields of Venezuela, and they taste as good down there as here.

You recall I indicated there was a lot I could tell you about eggs and their various grades. One concern alone grades the product as received from producers into 17 different grades or classes and returns them a different price for each respective grade. I recall, not so many years ago, when we purchased a dozen eggs we expected that one or two of the dozen would be bad. That condition is changed. Today it is very, very unusual for a bad egg to reach your home. This applies regardless of whether you live in the city or on the farm. What is the reason for this improvement? There are several. There is your State and Federal legislation that prohibits the sale of decomposed or unsound material. There have been improvements in the production, handling and shipping of eggs. Men have learned how to process or oil treat eggs so that you frequently are unaware of having eaten a storage egg.

My friends, there is romance in the egg business. Think of it! During the year 1929 there were shipped out of California a total of 2009 solid carloads. One firm alone during the year 1929 sold 1,346,704 cases,

each containing 30 dozen of eggs. With such quantities of eggs being sold isn't it important that you should know something about them? Something about what the labels mean?

The U. S. Department of Agriculture, through the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, grades eggs and issues Grading "Certificates" which show the grade or condition to either shippers or receivers in the trade. This grading service is available to distributors of quality eggs and some few avail themselves of the service. Those dealers are permitted to place on the cartons of graded eggs a "Certificate of quality," which states the date the eggs were graded, together with their quality. In addition, there appears the name of the firm and the size of eggs, whether large or medium. Three grades of eggs are recognized as suitable for table use. The first, or highest, is the U. S. Special. The second is the U. S. Extra, and third, the U. S. Standard. The fourth grade is called the U. S. Trade and embraces such eggs as are suitable for use in cooking and baking. They go chiefly to the bakery trade.

Three sizes of eggs are recognized in each grade. The first is "large" eggs, or those which average 24 ounces per dozen. The second is the "medium" grade, sometimes called Pullets, averaging 20 ounces per dozen. The Bureau of Agricultural Economics does not issue "Certificate of quality" on smaller eggs. The "small" eggs, or "Pee Wees", average 16 ounces to the dozen and, as a rule, are not sold in cartons. They might rattle. In a pile they appear of larger size.

Certain states have special legislation governing the terms applied to eggs which are at slight variance with the recognized U. S. grades. For example, in California the term "Fresh Eggs", or its equivalent, when appearing on labels, means a product comparable with the U. S. Special grade. If labeled "Eggs" unqualified, Farm Eggs, Ranch eggs, or under a manufacturer's brand, the eggs need be of only a U. S. Extra grade. Some storage eggs meet this grade requirement. You will seldom find on the markets in California any eggs labeled U. S. Standard, or third quality, of the so-called table grades. These are what you get in unlabeled packages of eggs, or under certain brands which do not indicate quality. They are cheap in price, as well as quality.

Remember, now, for an egg to meet the "U. S. Special" grade, the shell must be clean and sound. The yolk is dimly visible when held to the light. The white is firm and clear; the germ is not visible, and the air space at the end of egg does not exceed one-eighth of an inch in depth, and is regular. The requirements for the "U. S. Extra" grade are essentially the same, except that a quarter-inch air space is allowable. Into this class, you will note, will fall some storage eggs. In the "U. S. Standard" grade, the air-cell space permitted is three-eighths of an inch and, in addition, the white need be only reasonably firm and the germ may be slightly visible when the egg is held before the candle.

My friends, you will occasionally find the word "Certified" on cartons of eggs but that does not mean that those eggs are certified by the Government.

Eggs which have been graded by representatives of the U. S. Department of Agriculture will have a sticker label, applied on the carton, which is

designated as a "Certificate of Quality", issued by authority of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Certain distributing firms avail themselves of this grading service. If, when buying eggs, you desire to be absolutely certain as to grade or standard, insist upon getting those eggs which bear official "Certificate of Quality". Your retail grocer can get them, if you insist upon that kind.

I wonder if you always get a bargain when you buy cheap eggs. Did you notice those weights I gave you for the large, the medium and small? They were 24, 20 and 16 ounces per dozen. When you buy a large egg you actually receive $16\frac{2}{3}\%$ more weight than when you buy the medium, or Pullet, grade; likewise $33\frac{1}{3}\%$ more weight than when you buy a "small" or "Pec Wcc".

My friends, many of your storage eggs today do not deteriorate as they did in former years. They are oil-processed eggs. The process consists either of immersing the eggs in oil for a short period or spraying them with mineral oil. Either treatment closes the pores in the shell of the egg and prevents evaporation, also consequent deterioration. Those firms employing this process generally label the case and carton in a manner indicating the eggs to have been shell treated. That the eggs have been treated is not readily apparent to you, because it is possible by sand blasting or dusting the shells to remove the filament of oil, and it is only in the chemical laboratory that the treatment with oil can be proven. Of course, there are certain dealers that are not above selling you such treated eggs as "fresh" eggs.

You may encounter the word "Sterilized" on cartons. If so, kindly note that it merely indicates that the eggs have been oil treated and, constitute a mis-nomer, for oil treatment of eggs is in no sense a process of sterilization.

F. H. McCampbell, Associate Marketing Specialist of the U. S. Bureau of Agricultural Economics, at San Francisco, informs me there is a growing tendency in the egg trade to get away from the term "Storage" in the merchandising of eggs. More eggs are now being sold upon a quality basis. The fact that an egg has been placed in cold storage is not indicative of a low-quality egg. Stored eggs are seldom, if ever, carried over from season to season. In the west it is estimated that about 75% to 80% eggs intended for long storage are first oil treated. After 6 or 7 months these eggs will generally grade in the "U. S. Extra" class.

My friends, this concludes my fourteenth talk. I trust that you are becoming better informed and more discriminating buyers. If you are interested in receiving this information on eggs or the many other food products I have told you about, copies are available to you free. Address a post card to W. W. Vincent, U. S. Food and Drug Laboratory, San Francisco.

Next week I shall talk about flavoring materials, extracts, those necessary adjuncts to so many of our food products. There are things you should know about extracts.

